



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Archbishop Wake Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Black Lane, Blandford Forum,
Dorset
DT11 8SW

Diocese: Salisbury

Local authority: Dorset

Date of inspection: 1st October 2014

Date of last inspection: 12th March 2010

School's unique reference number: 141043 (before academisation 113754)

Headteacher: Jo Hicks

Inspector's name and number: Carole McCormack (224)

School context

The school has grown steadily since the last denominational inspection, now having 358 children on roll – an increase of approximately 50% over the last four years. In July 2014 the school formed a multi-academy trust with two other local voluntary aided church schools. Children attending the school come from the local area and are mainly from white British backgrounds. There are, however, a small number of children from other ethnic and faith backgrounds. In 2012 the school received the Rights Respecting Schools Award level 1, which recognises success in putting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child at the heart of a school. The proportion of children eligible for pupil premium is average, as is the proportion of children who are disabled or have special educational needs supported through school action, school action plus or statements. The school is fully extended and provides a breakfast club.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Archbishop Wake Primary as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The outstanding visionary leadership of the Headteacher and deputy Headteacher which values the uniqueness of each individual learner and focusses relentlessly on creating the best provision for all learners
- The highly evaluative and reflective practice of senior leaders and staff leading to robust accelerated school improvement
- The impact of Religious Education (RE) on the spiritual development of learners and their respect for diverse cultures and faiths
- The deeply nurturing ethos of the school and all members of the school community

Areas to improve

- To develop monitoring practices of the relatively newly formed governing body to build on the excellent procedures and policies already in place
- To consolidate the move from an evaluation of the content, delivery and response in

collective worship to an evaluation of its impact on the lives and learning of each individual learner

- Involving children in the planning of collective worship as well as in the leadership and evaluation of content

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is outstanding at meeting the needs of all learners

The focussed energetic leadership of the Headteacher is based upon the principle that ‘every child can change’. She and her deputy are tireless in seeking the most effective strategies for bringing about positive change, deepening wellbeing, opening spiritual awareness and constantly striving to raise achievement. As a result, children’s achievement in Literacy, Maths and RE is at least good. High quality first teaching is evident and a comprehensive range of intervention measures are in place to support and maximise children’s learning. The work of the church/school liaison worker has been planned by the school to impact directly upon the wellbeing and learning of the children. She both supports the spiritual development of vulnerable children and challenges the higher achieving children in RE. The school’s core values are consistently explored within their distinctively Christian context, through collective worship, RE and reflection spaces and displays. The Rights Respecting Schools accreditation - also placed firmly within the Christian context of the school - lends another layer to building secure community and respect within this vibrant church school. Much valuable work has been done within the last eighteen months on spirituality with the support of the diocese. Governors, staff and children have been involved in exploring the nature of spirituality and creating a policy to reflect the school’s approach. Spiritual concepts are threaded skilfully through RE and Collective Worship planning and are presented in displays, enabling the children to encounter, reflect and engage in these. The Headteacher explained how she had been challenged to maintain the ‘nurturing ethos’ of the school when she took over as head and had to robustly address underperformance. The harmony and focus of the staff testifies to her success in balancing school improvement with a deeply caring approach to staff, children and their families. This is a practical example of the way in which the Christian values of the school are made explicit. One of the main factors contributing to this is the Headteacher’s pro-active response to a need which arises in the school community. For example a bereavement support group was established when support could not be obtained elsewhere. Relationships between all stakeholder groups are outstanding and parents speak warmly of the approachability of the staff and of ‘never’ feeling ‘isolated’. The school actively works with the small number of diverse cultural and faith groups in the school. Muslim and Buddhist children are encouraged to share their beliefs in RE, thus building their self-confidence and offering a genuine and natural opportunity for co-operation and the growth of respect and understanding of different cultures and faiths. Opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are skilfully woven into the RE curriculum.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

One of the issues for development from the last denominational inspection was: ‘to monitor and evaluate collective worship, involving all stakeholders...’ The Headteacher put appropriate practices in place which monitored the content and delivery of worship, rather than the impact of Worship upon the lives and learning of the children. Children, staff and governors were involved in this monitoring and pro-forma and questionnaires were the main methods used. The Headteacher has subsequently refocused monitoring practices to include children’s responses to the impact of worship on their own lives. This practice needs to be personalised, extended and deepened. Collective worship is relevant to the school community, reflecting its core values and rooting them in Bible teaching. Open the Book, delivered weekly in acts of worship by the church/school liaison worker in line with the current worship theme, has helped to establish the practice of reflection within the school. Reflection is now a strong aspect of curricular and extra-curricular practice enabling learners to engage more deeply with the personal relevance of worship, their own spiritual development in the light of the

school's faithfulness to its Christian foundation and the 'Big Questions' which are threaded through provision. The Headteacher is collective worship leader and is solely responsible for the planning of worship. Core values, the church year and social and emotional aspects of learning are included in the planning, but lack of the systematic involvement of the children in this process reduces the impact and relevance of worship. The children's capacity to undertake this is demonstrated by the 'Come and Praise' acts of worship delivered (and planned) by the children weekly. The Lord's prayer and the school prayer are known by the children and spoken with understanding and respect and structures are in place to support the learners' growing understanding of the personal significance of prayer. Discussions with children from both key stages support the school's self-evaluation, which expresses the teaching of the concept of the Trinity as follows: 'The children are taught that God is a loving father, that Jesus is His son and with us through the spirit.'

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

The effectiveness of RE is outstanding. The training of the RE leader (an issue for development in the previous SIAS inspection) has been very well addressed. As a result the agreed syllabus has been effectively introduced and the excellent subject knowledge of the RE leader has supported colleagues in their understanding and teaching of the subject. Monitoring of teaching and learning in RE is undertaken regularly and evidence shows that teaching is always at least good. Outstanding and good lessons were observed during the inspection. Because of the quality of leadership and planning in the subject and the secure subject knowledge of the teachers, children are engaged and enthusiastic in their RE lessons. The locally agreed syllabus is knowledgeably used and constantly reviewed for impact. 'Big Questions' being explored by the school community are touched upon in RE, opportunities for reflection and individual spiritual growth are given and the distinctively Christian application of the school's core values are woven into provision. The approach of the RE leader to improvement of her subject was described by the Headteacher as 'relentless'; and tracking, assessment, monitoring of teaching and learning and pupil interviews have been introduced since the last inspection, resulting in accelerated subject improvement and achievement over the last two years. RE data (recorded on school pupil tracker online) shows attainment and progress in line with national expectations from low starting points; and achievement in comparison with the other core subjects is given. Assessments are rigorous and appropriate and rich evidence of achievement is held in floor books and KS2 children's 'personal journey' books.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is outstanding

The distinctively Christian vision held by senior leaders and governors does not distinguish between secular and church school improvement issues: one complements and strengthens the other. An example of this is the way in which the school has addressed the 2013 Ofsted issues through strategies which arise from the Christian character of the school. These include: opportunities for learners to increase their autonomy; to reflect constantly; and to develop a deep ownership of concepts through consideration of 'Big Questions'. Because the school has had to demonstrate accelerated school improvement since the current Headteacher came into post, every aspect of provision is highly evaluative and strategic. Evaluation and reflection are constantly referred to by staff, both in their teaching and in their conversation. This gives immense coherence and impact to provision. The close partnership between the Headteacher and her deputy is central to the leadership of the school and makes secure any question of succession planning. This is strongly underpinned by a programme of CPD for staff covering aspects of pupil progress, personal development and exploration of leadership potential. Staff and governors benefit from diocesan training and support. The latter has been apparent over the question of the recruitment of foundation governors for the school. An ethos committee has recently been formed and foundation governors are now very well placed to re-address focussed monitoring of the distinctively Christian character of the school and its effectiveness, liaising closely with foundation governors of partner schools in the multi-academy trust.

Partnerships between the school and the community, especially parents are exemplary. Support for families is outstanding and one parent said with deep conviction: 'I am very proud of our school.'

SIAMS report October 2014 Archbishop Wake Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
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